

**IN THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please replace the paragraph at lines 4-14 of specification page 11 with the following replacement paragraph:

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The edge router 200 illustratively includes sixteen (16) line cards 210, each of which may be configured to operate at various rates including but not limited to OC-12 (622 Mbps), DS0 and so on. The point-to-point links 242 coupled to the line cards must be capable of supporting such data rates. An interconnect protocol is provided that enables encoding of packets over the point-to-point links of the interconnect system to thereby limit the bandwidth consumed by overhead when transmitting the packets within the aggregation router. An example of an interconnect protocol that may be advantageously used is disclosed in co-pending and commonly-owned U.S. Patent Application serial number 09/791,062, now issued as U.S. Patent No. 6,973,072, titled *High Performance Protocol for an Interconnect System of an Intermediate Network Node* and is hereby included by reference in its entirety as though fully set forth herein.

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